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ABSTRACT

A set of six programmed culture assimilators, written in English for use in French classes at all levels, is presented. The assimilators do not deal with specific classroom activities but rather with Mary's activities outside class. The assimilators are entitled: Having Breakfast, Taking the Bus, In the Latin Quarter, Lunch in a Cafe, In the Grocery Store, and At the Movies. Each consists of a description of Mary's activity, followed by a multiple-choice question and an explanatory paragraph on each possible answer. The assimilators emphasize differences between French and American culture on each of the topics. (Author/RM)

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'MARY'S FIRST SCHOOLDAY IN PARIS

A set of six culture assimilators

written in English for use in

French classes at all levels

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MARY'S FIRST SCHOOLDAY IN PARIS

Mary, an American college student, has just arrived in Paris to study French at the Sorbonne. During her first schoolday she seems to run into problems everywhere. By figuring out why she is often in trouble, we can begin to understand certain aspects of French culture and everyday life and how they differ from (or are similar to) our customs in America.

Mary is living with a French family, the Dupontes, and will have breakfast and dinner with them everyday as part of her room and board.

Having breakfast

Madame Dupont wakes Mary up bright and early on her first schoolday in Paris. Mary dresses quickly and goes into the kitchen for breakfast. She is always hungry in the morning and hopes that there will be bacon and eggs, juice, toast and coffee. In the meantime, Madame Dupont has left for work but has left Mary's breakfast on the table. There is a pot of coffee with a pitcher of warm milk and a basket containing four or five slices of French bread from the night before and a jar of jam. Mary is disappointed with the meager bill of fare but eats what is there before leaving for class.

Why did Madame Dupont leave such a paltry breakfast for Mary?

1. Mary thought that the Duponts must be poor. (Turn to page 3)

2. Mary thought that perhaps the shops didn't open until 9 or 10 o'clock. (Turn to page 3)

3. Mary thought that the stale bread showed that Madame Dupont didn't like her very much. (Turn to page 3)

4. The French usually eat very little for breakfast. (Turn to page 3)

1. The fact that there was [illegible] does not [illegible] were gone. French bread does not [illegible] preservatives that American bread contains and goes stale at [illegible] overnight). In addition, the French wait [illegible] American bread to be out merely three hundred days.

2. This is an unlikely answer since most Parisian bakeries open before 7:00 a.m. The bakers spend most of the night baking and then sleep during the day. Some bakeries like ours stays in Paris close from 1-4 p.m. and reopens from 4-8 p.m. Fresh bread is put out below Paris, once in early morning and once in the afternoon (usually around 4:00).

3. This is not a very probable answer. You'll find that the bread can stale didn't mean that Italians figured it didn't like bad. Because the stores, Italians figure probably didn't have time to go out and buy fresh bread before assembling the sandwich. Besides, the French usually finish up their bread left over from the dinners of the night before.

4. This is the best answer. The breakfast of the [illegible] French and Americans are processed. The is French not a very light breakfast and a large meal at noon, whereas Americans eat both for breakfast and just a sandwich or cupcake for lunch. Most American students in France get used to a holiday little for breakfast but, shorter out of habit or [illegible], they usually eat just a sandwich at noon. The [illegible] meal is similar in both countries except that in France it the meal lasts longer and is served in courses instead of all at [illegible].

[illegible]

[illegible] breakfast, Mary leaves the apartment and notices the shoes in each of the two shop that Amelia Bigelow showed her the previous evening. The two women said Mary goes on. She takes out the booklet that Amelia Bigelow had given her, inserts it in the mailbox next to the shoes in order to reclaim it and goes to her work. When walking about ten steps, a middle-aged man on the bus and asks to see the passengers' tickets. When he gets to Mary, she shows his booklet and gives something to the conductor and nobody at all. She has gotten on the bus, the conductor starts working with a calculator namely that Mary still have to pay a fine. Mary protests namely that she had her booklet but the conductor gives her the address and

Do not the middle conductor does Mary (1) a fine?

1. Mary's booklet was (to) the address. (Turn to page 3)

2. Mary had not given enough (to) her ride. (Turn to page 3)

3. Mary had used a (used) stamp booklet and was riding a (from) (then) line. (Turn to page 3)

4. Mary's booklet had not been punched by the two (times). (Turn to page 3)

1. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

1. This answer is not probable since, according to French standards, Mary's lunch was not exceptionally large. The French eat a light breakfast and a relatively heavy lunch. It is not surprising to see a French businessman eating an appetizer, hot dish, salad, cheese and dessert accompanied by a bottle of wine. French working women all seem to be watching their weight and usually don't eat quite so much. The French "lunch hour" lasts from 12:00 to 1:30 or 2:00. After such a heavy lunch (especially with wine) it is surprising that the French get anything done when they get back to their offices in the afternoon.

2. Although this answer would be true in an American restaurant where one is expected to keep ordering, it is not true in a French café. It is not unusual to spend a hour or two over one cup of coffee on the terrace of a café. The waiter will usually leave you alone until you call him to reorder (and he sometimes ignores you even then). The glaring stare of an American waiter waiting to take a reorder is almost non-existant in France. However, those customers who wish to be served quickly and less expensively usually stand at the bar inside the café where drinks cost quite a bit less than at a table.

3. This is the best answer. Mary did not realize that in almost all French restaurants and cafés the tip is added directly onto the check. Thus she had left the waiter a 30% tip without knowing it. (No wonder he was happy!) In America one usually leaves a tip that is in accordance with the quality of the service he has received. However, in France one is obliged to pay the tip whether or not the service is very good. Either the waiter writes on the tip or it is added on automatically by the cash register. If the service is really exceptional, one usually leaves another 5% or so on the table.

4. Although this answer is possible, it is not probable. French waiters have been known to "draguer" or flirt with female customers. However, lunch time in a cafe is usually extremely hectic and the waiter would certainly not have time to flirt. In addition, waiters must be careful about their amorous pursuits since a complaint to the owner by an irate female client would sometimes be enough to cost him his job.

In the Grocery Store

Mary arrives home at 6:00 p.m. and Madame Dupont asks her to run down to the little grocery store on the corner to buy a package of butter. Mary walks into the store and while the owner is waiting on another customer Mary picks up a package of butter, brings it to the cash register and pays for it. The owner looks very annoyed, takes Mary's money and doesn't even say thank you. Once again, Mary walks out very confused.

Why was the shop owner annoyed with Mary?

1. Mary should not have served herself. (Turn to page 14)

2. The store owner thought that Mary was trying to rush her. (Turn to page 14)

3. The store owner was mad because Mary took the last package of butter. (Turn to page 15)

4. Since it was 6:00 p.m., the owner was in a hurry to close the store. (Turn to page 15)

1. This is the most accurate answer. In small grocery stores and bakeries in France, customers are waited on by the owner or one of the employees. These stores are not self-service stores where shoppers take things from the shelves themselves. Within the last few years, large supermarkets have begun appearing all over France. In these large stores one shops like in America (shopping carts and all). However, most of these supermarkets are located outside the cities and one must have a car to get to them. Most French housewives shop once or twice a day and carry their groceries home in a basket or "filet".

2. This is a possible answer. Since the owner had seen Mary serve herself she may have assumed that Mary was in such a rush that she had served herself. Service in the small shops is certainly not the quick self-service style that we are so used to in America. There is seldom even a cash register and the owner totals the bill on a little pad of paper that hangs from her belt and makes change from a simple money drawer.

3. This is also a possible answer. Because of limited space the shop owners cannot store large stocks of products and often run out before the end of the day. Many times the owner will set aside the last bottle of milk or the last package of butter or other product for her regular customers. Since Mary served herself she may have taken a package of butter that was reserved for someone else.

4. This is very unlikely because shops in France usually don't close before 8:00 p.m. Most people work from 9 to 6 and dinner is served around 8:00. French housewives usually do the shopping for the evening meal between 6 and 7. There are very few "all-night markets" in Paris and those that do exist are very expensive.

At the Movies

In the evening after dinner, Suzy and her friend Laura decide to go to the movies. There is a theatre quite near the apartment and the two girls hurry to make the 10:00 show. They are pleased to see that they can show their student ID's at the ticket window and be admitted for about half of the normal price. As they walk into the theatre, an usherette takes their tickets and shows them to their seats. The girls like just the one and are excited but the usherette remains beside them for 5 or 6 minutes and then finally shows off, murmuring many things to herself. The girls look at each other in bewilderment and wait for the movie to begin.

Why was the usherette so annoyed with the girls?

1. They were sitting in the wrong seats. (Turn to page 17)

2. She was waiting to show the girls the way to the candy concession. (Turn to page 17)

3. She was waiting for a tip. (Turn to page 18)

4. She was waiting to take their coats. (Turn to page 18)

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

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